

METHOD FOR CONTACT-CONNECTING AN ELECTRICAL COMPONENT TO A
SUBSTRATE HAVING A CONDUCTOR STRUCTURE

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Cross-Reference to Related Application:

This application is a continuation of copending International Application No. PCT/DE02/01254, filed April 5, 2002, which designated the United States and was not published in English.

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Background of the Invention:

Field of the Invention:

When contact-connecting electrical components, in particular semiconductor components (chips), on substrates, use is
15 usually made of relatively expensive substrate materials, such as, for example, flexible sheet carriers made of plastic, and expensive electrically conductive adhesives. However, many adhesives of this type already require, for curing, relatively high temperatures at which the plastic material of the sheet
20 carrier is damaged or a metallization layer applied thereon is stripped off.

It should be endeavored to use inexpensive soldering methods for contact-connecting the component on the substrate since
25 these methods are more cost-effective relative to the electrically conductive adhesives. However, on account of

their high joining temperatures, soldering methods require particularly temperature-resistant and hence expensive substrate materials.

5 A further difficulty arises if the surface of the substrate onto which the electrical component is intended to be contact-connected has unevennesses that exceed the height of the solder layer. Particularly when the solder layer is not only intended to ensure the mechanical fixing of the component but
10 also serves for the production of electrically conductive contacts, the liquid solder phase can no longer completely fill the volume of the cavities below the component with the result that open electrical contacts can occur. In conventional contact-connection methods using conductive
15 adhesives or solder balls (solder bumps) that have a height of 30 to 100 μm , unevennesses in the region of a few μm are effortlessly compensated for. When thin solder layers are used, the above-mentioned problems can arise.

20 Summary of the Invention:

It is accordingly an object of the invention to provide a method for contact-connecting an electrical component to a substrate having a conductor structure that overcomes the above-mentioned disadvantages of the prior art methods of this
25 general type, which yields a permanent electrically conductive connection of sufficient conductivity in the case of an uneven

surface of the substrate independently of the thickness of a bonding agent.

With the foregoing and other objects in view there is
5 provided, in accordance with the invention, a method for contact-connecting an electrical component on a substrate having a conductor structure. The method includes introducing a bonding agent between the electrical component and the conductor structure of the substrate. The bonding agent has a
10 melting point being at a temperature at which the substrate is not damaged. A permanent electrically conductive connection is produced by melting the bonding agent and the bonding agent subsequently solidifying. This is performed by the steps of increasing a joining temperature above a glass transition
15 temperature of the substrate, and exerting a pressure on the electrical component resulting in the substrate experiencing a plastic deformation and the electrical component being pressed together with the conductor structure into the substrate in a positively locking manner. The bonding agent is brought to
20 solidification before the plastic deformation of the substrate takes place.

In the method according to the invention, a bonding agent, preferably a metallic solder material containing at least two
25 metallic or semiconducting chemical elements, is introduced between the electrical component and the conductor structure

of the substrate. The solder material is configured in such a way that it has a melting point which lies below a critical temperature for the resistiveness of the substrate. The joining temperature during the contact-connection is chosen in
5 such a way that the substrate, with a pressure being exerted on the electrical component, experiences a plastic deformation, with the result that the component is pressed together with the conductor structure into the substrate in a positively locking manner.

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According to the invention, the joining temperature is deliberately increased above the glass transition temperature of the substrate, with the result that the component can be pressed into the substrate until the unevennesses of the
15 substrate surface are compensated for. Since at least parts of the conductor structure that are located below the component are concomitantly pressed into the substrate during this operation, the conductor structure must be elastic such that it does not break or tear. On account of the only small
20 unevennesses of the surface of the substrate, the customary conductor tracks made of copper or nickel are sufficiently expandable or compressible.

In the method according to the invention, use is preferably
25 made of a substrate made of a soft material that has a melting point below 120° C. The material may be composed, for

example, of PVC (polyvinyl chloride), PET or the like.

Substrates made of this material are very soft, have a low melting point and, moreover, are highly cost-effective.

5 The method according to the invention can be used to connect an electrical component purely mechanically to the substrate or to contact-connect electrical contacts of the component directly to corresponding contact points, which are part of the conductor structure on the substrate, for the purpose of
10 producing an electrically conductive connection.

In the first-mentioned alternative, an electrically conductive connection could be produced by bonding wires, for example. The term contact-connection should then be understood to mean
15 that a mechanical connection between component and substrate that is uniform and thus secure against stripping-off is ensured over the entire connecting area of the component.

In the latter case, the bonding agent is introduced between a
20 contact of the electrical component and the corresponding contact points of the conductor track. The parameters of the method are preferably chosen in such a way that the bonding agent is made to solidify before the plastic deformation of the substrate commences. This procedure has the advantage
25 that lateral material movements of the substrate during the elastic deformation can no longer shift the position of the

contact points. Such a shift could, if appropriate, impair the electrically conductive connection between the component and the substrate either by virtue of no connection being produced or by virtue of a connection between non-desired
5 conductors being affected. If the lateral material movements of the substrate were not limited, the spacings of the contact points and conductor tracks would have to be increased. However, this would entail a larger area requirement.

10 A solder material made of at least two elementary metals or semiconductor materials is preferably used as the bonding agent. The molten solder material is preferably configured in such a way that it enters into an alloy or intermetallic compound or phase with the metal of the metal layer of the
15 sheet or with the metal of the contact of the semiconductor component. Preferably, the melting point is so high that, in the event of an attempt to melt the solder connection, the sheet would inevitably be damaged or at the very least the metal layer would be stripped from the sheet and the entire
20 configuration would thus become unusable.

A solder material which is particularly suitable for this is a composition - i.e. a mixture containing at least and preferably two components which form a mixture, an alloy or a
25 stoichiometric compound - whose proportions are chosen in such a way that the composition lies at a eutectic point or at

least in the vicinity of a eutectic point. This is because, for this choice of composition, it holds true that the melting point of the composition increases each time the proportions of the components change. When the solder material is melted,
5 an alloy or an intermetallic compound is produced which contains a proportion of the metal of the metal layer of the sheet or of the contact of the semiconductor component, with the result that the composition of the material forming the electrically conductive connection differs from the eutectic
10 of the original composition of the solder material to such a significant extent that the melting point is considerably higher, in particular above the temperatures safe for the sheet. In this case, the term approximately eutectic composition shall define a composition having a melting point
15 which differs from the temperature of the eutectic at most by 10° C.

What is appropriate as a possible solder material, preferably in conjunction with a metal layer of a sheet made of copper or
20 nickel, is primarily a material containing bismuth (chemical symbol Bi). Eutectic or approximately eutectic (temperature difference with respect to the eutectic at most 10° C) compositions which achieve what is desired are materials from the group of a composition containing bismuth and indium, a

composition containing bismuth and tin and a composition containing indium and tin.

As an alternative, a thermoplastic adhesive that solidifies
5 before the plastic deformation of the substrate commences could also be used. The use of a thermoplastic adhesive additionally ensures sealing of the contact points.

In order to heat the configuration containing the component
10 and the substrate, a laser operating in the infrared region or a laser having a wavelength of $<1\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ is appropriate. The laser operated in the infrared region heats the metallic elements from that side of the substrate that is remote from the component, whereby the solder material is made to melt.
15 The solder material solidifies after the laser has been switched off. The heat stored in the metal suffices, however, to heat the adjacent substrate, whereby the latter can be plastically deformed. The electrical component is heated by the laser operated with a wavelength of $<1\text{ }\mu\text{m}$. Given
20 sufficiently long irradiation, the solder material is first made to melt. The solder material solidifies after the laser has been switched off, the heat stored in the component heating the adjacent substrate material to a sufficient extent to bring about the plastic deformation of the substrate with a
25 pressure being exerted on the component.

Other features which are considered as characteristic for the invention are set forth in the appended claims.

5 Although the invention is illustrated and described herein as embodied in a method for contact-connecting an electrical component to a substrate having a conductor structure, it is nevertheless not intended to be limited to the details shown, since various modifications and structural changes may be made
10 therein without departing from the spirit of the invention and within the scope and range of equivalents of the claims.

The construction and method of operation of the invention, however, together with additional objects and advantages
15 thereof will be best understood from the following description of specific embodiments when read in connection with the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings:

20 Fig. 1 is a diagrammatic, perspective view of a component and an uneven substrate before a contact-connection; and

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the component that has been contact-connected onto an uneven substrate according to the
25 invention.

Description of the Preferred Embodiments:

Referring now to the figures of the drawing in detail and first, particularly, to Fig. 1 thereof, there is shown an electrical component 2 positioned above a substrate 1. A conductor structure with conductor tracks 3 and contact points 4 is situated on a surface of the substrate 1 which faces the component 2. In an exemplary fashion, only two conductor tracks with a respective contact point are illustrated in the example. It cannot be seen from the perspective view that the component 2 has two corresponding contacts on its main side facing the substrate 1.

The surface of the substrate 1 which faces the component 2 has an unevenness in the form of an exemplary step. For reasons of clarity, the step is illustrated in an exaggerated raised manner and, in reality, will be significantly less pronounced. Moreover, the step need not - in contrast to the present illustration - be formed at right angles to the surface of the substrate.

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As can be seen from Fig. 1, in the case of conventional contact-connection, a part of the component 2 would be situated on the upper part of the step, while the other region would project beyond the step. If a solder material which is thicker than the height of the step is used, the height difference can readily be compensated for. However, if a

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bonding agent which is thinner than the height of the step is used, in the absence of further measures an unstable configuration results through which the component itself could be impaired by mechanical stresses or the electrically
5 conductive connection between the contact points 4 and the corresponding contacts of the component 2 could be impaired.

According to the invention, for the purpose of contact-connection, first the solder material is applied to the
10 contact points of the substrate 1 and/or to the contacts of the component 2. Afterwards, the component 2 is brought into contact with the surface of the substrate, a pressure is exerted on the component and the configuration is then heated. The heating can be affected using a laser, for example. When
15 a solder material having a low melting point is used, such as e.g. a BiIn alloy, an InSn eutectic or an intermetallic phase (for example BiIn), the solder melts and solidifies before the substrate has been heated to an extent such that it melts. Only after the solidification of the solder material does the
20 plastic deformation of the substrate commence, whereby the component is pressed together with the conductor tracks 3 located underneath into the substrate in a positively locking manner. The result is illustrated in Fig. 2.